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ABSTRACT

Although challenged by some, the student teaching experience continues to be the most extensive, and in the eyes of most educators, the most important experience in the preparation of teachers. Given the importance of the student teaching experience, it behooves teacher educators to carefully examine student teaching to determine ways to improve the preparation of teachers entering the profession. Research indicates that many of the more recent changes in the preparation of teachers have focused on the on-campus coursework and in the extension of field experiences, while minimum attention has been paid to improving the quality of the student teaching experience. Questions to be answered that are reviewed in the paper are the role of the cooperating teacher and university supervisor, types of supervisory models, and selection and training of cooperating teachers and university supervisors. The paper concludes with a number of recommendations designed to help improve the student teaching experience. (Author)

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Maximizing the Development of Student Teachers
During Student Teaching

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Maximizing the Development of Student Teachers

For a capstone experience that is considered by most educators (Conant, 1965; Lortie, 1975; Ryan et al., 1980; Stratemeyer & Lindsey, 1958; Zeichner, 1978) to be the most important component in the preparation of new teachers, Schools, Departments, and Colleges of Education probably expend fewer resources proportionally, assign responsibilities for supervision to the least valued employees, and have less control over the student teaching program than any other component of professional education. With the exception of changes in the amount of time in student teaching--generally increased, often by state mandate--and the placement in public school rather than laboratory schools, student teaching has not changed noticeably in the last 75 years. I would even speculate that the loss of close supervisory contact and control as a result of placement in public school classrooms instead of campus laboratory school has probably lessened the effectiveness of the student teaching experience to reinforce concepts and techniques taught in university education classes.

Before the wrath of the profession falls on me, a loyal subject, I want to publicly declare that I firmly believe that beginning teachers are

better prepared now than at any time in the past, but the improvement has not been the result of changes in the student teaching experience.

Improvements during the last decade have been more the result of the strides in incorporating the "Science of Education" into preparation programs including the Effective Schools Research, improved understanding of learning and motivation, training in interpersonal relations, exposure to the real world through increased field experiences in public school settings, and the renewed focus on improvement of instruction in K-12 schools through staff development activities.

This paper will review some of the literature on the role of the cooperating teacher and university supervisor in the student teaching triad, and make recommendations for improvements in selection, role identification and training. The author believes that the most significant changes in the preparation of new teachers in the 1990's will come as the result of improving the quality of field experiences provided teachers in training.

Although efforts have been made to expand the supervisory triad of cooperating teacher and university supervisor to include a non-evaluative university consultant (Maxey, 1982) and even to eliminate the university

supervisor (Bowman, 1979; Morris, 1974), the triad is still the dominant pattern. Although challenged by many, the triad continues, either by necessity or tradition, to be used in the vast majority of student teaching programs.

There appears to be voluminous research on the importance of the cooperating teacher during the student teaching experience (Funk, Hoffman, Keithley, & Long, 1980; Hersh, Hill & Leighton, 1982; Karmos & Jacko, 1977; Lofquist, 1986; Zeichner & Tabachnik, 1982). The importance may have been best illustrated by Funk and Long (1982) in an article in Action In Teacher Education when they reported "the cooperating teacher is overwhelmingly the most significant other for a student teacher" (p. 63). Although there is broad agreement on the influence of the cooperating teacher, there are numerous issues raised in the research and practice concerning the selection, role, training, and supervisory style of cooperating teachers.

The selection of cooperating teachers to work with student teachers is usually the responsibility of the Director of Student Teaching with input from the student, university faculty, and public school administrators and teachers. Cooperating teacher-student teacher

placements can be determined in light of several variables. Although typically affected more by geographical convenience and availability of cooperating teachers, there is some support for compatibility matching. (Curtis & Andrews, 1954; Hayes, 1969; Nelson & Hutcherson, 1970; Price, 1961 ; Sorenson & Halpert, 1968). This concept has been challenged by Johnson (1969) and Mahlios(1982) and Mahlios concluded, " there is little reason to believe that teachers of one cognitive type are more likely to provide a more supportive relationship with student teachers or bring about greater professional or technical growth" (p.68) . Mahlios went on to say:

The overall findings are clearly not supportive of the theory suggested by the literature that dyadic compatibility is more likely to promote student teacher achievement. Indeed there appears to be more support for the concept of mismatching student and supervising teachers. (p.69)

Studies by Easterly (1977) and Kilgore (1979) indicated that student teachers model behavior and change attitudes toward that of the cooperating teacher, and therefore it would be better to place each student teacher with a cooperating teacher who exemplified the attitude

and behaviors desired in student teachers. Morin and Lembeck (1987) suggest it is important that the cooperating teacher hold similar beliefs with the university personnel about the preparation of student teachers. They recommended that selection efforts should include a screening system for prospective supervising teachers that elicits the candidate's expressed willingness to cooperate in the accomplishment of mutually agreed upon objectives. Matching student teachers with cooperating teachers who are supportive people and have similar philosophical beliefs would appear to minimize interpersonal problems. This seems to be supported by Funk and Long (1982) who reported that cooperating teachers can be of greatest help by giving emotional support and guidance.

A more effective model from the standpoint of developing the student teachers to their fullest potential, though, would seem to require that the cooperating teacher needs to create opportunities to challenge the student teacher (Killian, 1982), indicating that personality match only was not enough to guarantee the best placement. Perhaps of equal importance, was a cooperating teacher who could use the concept of situational supervision (Hersey , 1984), providing support and creating

tension as needed to move the student teacher toward the development of a self-critical, reflective professional teacher.

Another way to look at the selection of cooperating teachers would be to adopt the concept of the cooperating teacher as a mentor. Clawson (1980) defined mentors as people oriented toward others, analytical, tolerant of ambiguity, and respectful of those with whom they work. Stahlhut, Hawkes, Fratianni and Doerzman (1987) reported "the most critical function of mentors is the support and facilitation of the person's dream. The true mentor fosters the beginning teacher's development by believing in them, sharing the dream, and giving their blessing " (p.14). Mentors have been used a great deal in the induction of new teachers, but the concept has not been broadly implemented with student teachers, perhaps due to the developmental level of most student teachers, and their desire and need for direction.

Selecting the most effective cooperating teachers is not really feasible until the appropriate role of cooperating teachers has been defined. Grimmett and Ratzlaff (1986) reported that the poorly defined cooperating teacher roles compounded the confusion about cooperating teacher preference of supervisory styles, and it is easy to understand the

reasons for such a conclusion. Conflict would likely occur when a cooperating teacher is expected to provide an inquiry based, reflective orientation to teaching, and he interprets his role as directive, telling, and modeling "correct" behavior. Likewise, the expectation that a cooperating teacher would use a supportive role will conflict when she actually uses a highly evaluative, critical role.

O'Shea (1984) found that the most effective cooperating teacher approach was directive, leaving the student teacher little choice in instructional approach. Copeland (1982) also found that student teachers preferred the directive approach and speculated that student teachers' preference for immediate, concrete solutions might be a result of the student teachers' not being able to analyze teaching problems due to their lack of experiential background. He concluded, though, that as student teachers became more experienced and confident, they preferred more self analytic and reflective supervisory styles. This seems to further support the use of situational supervision, modifying styles based on the need of the student teachers in light of their development and the situation.

A third issue related to cooperating teachers is the aspect of training. Cornish (1979) reflected on the lack of resources expended on

training as follows:

If one accepts the importance of the cooperating teacher and university supervisor on the student teacher, then one must be amazed that in our multimillion dollar educational system so little is done to give the proper training to these two key personnel. There is a need for a well organized educational program for those people working with student teachers. (p. 17)

Although interest in training cooperating teachers has increased during the 1980's, a 1987 survey of member institutions of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education indicated that formal supervisory training was seldom noted among the criteria for selection of cooperating teachers (Klinger cited in Sparks & Brodeur, 1987). Efforts in training appear to be hampered by limited resources, limited time, and disagreements over responsibility.

Training generally focuses on two areas: development of observation and supervision skills and teaching cooperating teachers new teaching techniques. Freiberg, Waxman and Houston (1987) reported that skill training in observation and supervision was often focused on studying a classroom analysis system, observing models of classroom lessons,

analyzing models of classroom lessons, self-analysis of classroom lessons, and giving and receiving peer feedback. Metcalf and Shillington (1989) reported that training produces change in the behavior of cooperating teachers and has been demonstrated to promote more desirable behavior in the student teachers working with trained cooperating teachers.

Killian, McIntyre and Wheeler (1987) reported on a training program designed to help cooperating teachers describe classroom behavior in behavioral rather than judgmental statements and to free their student teachers to examine teaching problems important to them. It was found that trained cooperating teachers differed from untrained cooperating teachers in four ways: involvement of the student teacher in full group instruction, amount of feedback, use of positive and constructive criticism, and frequency of planning together. Killian et al. (1987) found that trained cooperating teachers involved student teachers in full group instruction sooner, provided more feedback when compared to untrained supervisors, provided more positive and constructive criticism throughout the experience, and shifted more of the planning and clerical responsibilities to the student teacher near the end of the experience.

These authors surmised that from the student teacher's standpoint, it might have been easier to work with an untrained supervisor than with one who was trained.

Supervisory styles of cooperating teachers may be the most overlooked, yet most powerful, of the supportive techniques. There appears to be limited emphasis in the research on different supervisory styles and their effectiveness. It appears that supervisory style just "happens", probably based more on how the cooperating teachers were supervised as student teachers or how they had been supervised by administrators rather than on any research base.

There is some evidence that a supervisory style based on high conceptual functioning encouraged student teachers toward professional and responsible independence while low conceptual functioning generally fostered unrealistic dependency. The use of questioning strategies and exploration procedures to facilitate discovery of insights rather than directly sharing critical feedback was beneficial, although student teachers generally preferred direct feedback (Grimmett, 1983).

Zahorik (1988) identified supervisory styles termed as behavior prescription, (focus on techniques) idea interpretation, (focus on beliefs),

and person support, (focus on decision making). He postulated that the supervisory style was the result of the goal set for the student teacher by the supervisor and by the style of interaction preferred by the supervisor (p.14). Although supervisors may use all three of the styles described, there is some indication that the most effective style may relate to the recommendation that supervisors should change from a direct supervisory style at the beginning of student teaching to a more flexible, inquiry oriented style later in the experience.

The second supportive relationship I want to consider is that of the university supervisor. The research is not nearly as voluminous, nor has it treated the university supervisor with the positiveness that it has cooperating teachers. Griffin et al. (1983) found supervision of student teachers dominated by the cooperating teacher. Bowman (1979) suggested that the university supervisor's effectiveness was so insignificant that type of supervision should be discontinued. Other studies indicate that cooperating teachers and student teachers do not find value in university supervision (Karmos and Jacko, 1977), student teachers model behaviors of cooperating teachers regardless of approval or disapproval of the university supervisor (Zevin, 1974), and university supervision has no

effect (Morris, 1974)

Zimpher, DeVoss and Nott (1980) concluded that although the university supervisor has minimal impact on the classroom performance, they are important in managing the experience, acting as personal confidant to the cooperating teacher and student teacher, and in providing evaluation and constructive criticism . Metcalf and Shillington (1989) summarize their research on university supervision as follows, "The university supervisor appears to be most effective, perhaps necessary, in the administrative, managerial and technical aspects of supervision rather than the instructional or personal "(p.32). Richardson-Koehler (1988) surmised it might be better to interpret the role of the university supervisor as supervising a process rather than supervising a specific student teacher.

A major issue in assessing the effectiveness of the university supervisor lies in the uncertainty of the role identification. If the university supervisor is to duplicate the role of the cooperating teacher by observing and giving feedback on a similar schedule, the expectation appears unrealistic. Given just the periodic biweekly observations typical

of university supervisors' schedules, the conflict with other responsibilities and the necessities of travel make time a major problem (O'Shea, 1988). Zahorik (1988) indicated that university supervision is also influenced by supervisors' attitudes. He reported on a study of university supervision of student teachers wherein the interest of the faculty members in supervision varied dramatically, with some reporting student teaching supervision as an important function in which they valued the work. However some faculty members reported that university supervision of student teachers had little or no functional value, and they preferred to be conducting research, teaching graduate courses, or being involved in program development (p.13). The problem of role identification, therefore, was compounded by not only how the university defined the role of university supervisors, but also how each individual supervisor perceived and valued the role.

The student teaching center concept described by Davis (1982) provides one possible answer to the problems described for university supervision. By placing a number of student teaching in a single site, the problems related to travel time, adequate time for observation and conferencing, and overall supervision might be partially alleviated.

Formal training for university supervisors appears to be almost nonexistent. The lack of training emphasis might be the result of the limited value placed on student teaching supervision at the university, the fact that many supervisors are graduate assistants or adjunct-faculty on temporary assignment, or the belief that someone working at the university understands the process and is appropriately trained as a result of previous experiences. None of these explanations are particularly palatable, but without a research base one can only speculate.

Summary

The information about student teaching, cooperating teachers and university supervisors is overwhelming, but of even more concern is the lack of agreement. As in most human-oriented activities, there does not seem to be a best way, but rather conflicting information from which one must pick and choose, weighing things based on personal mind-set. For each director of student teaching, cooperating teacher and university supervisor, decisions must be made as to how they will approach their task in the student teaching model. Based upon my experience, my analysis and interpretation of the research, and my own belief system, I

would like to make the following recommendations.

Discussions and Recommendations

1. An effort should be made to select and train cooperating teachers to fit into a mentorship-type mold. The supportive, inquiry oriented, reflective type of supervisor appears to be most beneficial in the development of confident, reflective teachers.

2. Given the developmental process of student teachers, cooperating teachers need to be able to use a situational supervisory style, being more directive at the outset of the student teaching experience, and then moving toward a more indirect, reflective mode. We need to recognize that most student teachers go through a developmental process, and supervision of them must reflect their stage of development.

3. A clear definition of the roles of the cooperating teacher and university supervisor should be developed, preferably through collaborative efforts with university and public school personnel. These roles need to be communicated, and only supervisors willing to work within the guidelines should be assigned student teachers.

4. Training should be provided cooperating teachers to enable them to provide feedback on behavioral terms rather than judgmental terms, to reflect on their own teaching, and to provide support as a mentor of new teachers. Effective communication is absolutely vital in the student teaching paradigm, and every effort must be made to provide help in facilitating the communication process.

5. Cooperating teachers and university supervisors should be taught to use various supervisory styles based on the needs of the student teacher and the situation. More research needs to be done on the effects of situational supervision.

6. It is recommended that the university supervisor should serve more in a coordinating role: facilitating communication, working to guarantee the quality of the experience, and serving to validate the perceptions of the cooperating teacher. The roles should be seen as complementary rather than duplicative or competitive.

7. The use of part-time and adjunct faculty to supervise student teachers for the university needs to be evaluated, more from the standpoint of the message of worth communicated from the university

than the ability of the personnel to satisfactorily complete the tasks. The use of student teaching centers may provide for an effective combination of university and supervisory responsibilities for university faculty, although Schools, Departments, and Colleges of Education must still determine the value of student teaching supervision by university faculty.

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